

3/8/10

To: Town Council

From: Betty Wassmundt

Farmland Ordinance: I want to provide two letters I had written to Council back in 2008 when this ordinance was proposed. I trust you will read them when the minutes are published. I would ask you tonight to clearly define your goal in enacting this ordinance and to equally clearly show how this ordinance will accomplish the goal.

Pledge of Allegiance as discussed at last meeting.

I urge you to recite the Pledge at the start of each meeting.

Parking Code: I urge you to table further discussion on this. There is a Landlord's Association formed and there is a proposed Homeowner's Association. Let these two organizations come to function; I believe they may be the solution to some rental issues. Your ordinances have not been so.

State taxes

[http://money.cnn.com/2009/04/10/pf/taxes/state\\_tax\\_rates/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/2009/04/10/pf/taxes/state_tax_rates/index.htm)

It was commented at last council meeting that CT is one of the lowest tax states. No council member or legislator or Town Manager disputed this. I request that this Council provide documentation to substantiate this claim. I am providing you with a reference for an article recently published by CNN Money which claims that CT is the third highest state in tax paying dollars per capita and is exceeded only by New York and New Jersey in its tax burden upon the citizen.

There has been talk of arsenals:

What has happened about the shotguns this town was to purchase?

How many do we have? Where are they kept? Who uses them and under what circumstances? What is town policy regarding use of these shotguns? Judging from some other town policies I see, they might be used for certain town employees to hunt game birds.

MARCH 8, 2010

~~February 6, 2008~~

To: TOWN COUNCIL  
From: Betty Wassmundt

I'm writing about the farm property ordinance and the expected financial impact. In case you haven't had time to check the assessor's data, I'll give you my analysis. I assume that you have the data from the assessor.

The \$21,500 figure is derived by taking all farm type buildings on farm land. Not all of these qualify for the proposed exemption because of the income/expense requirement, not at this time, anyway.

The \$11,000 (\$13,000 was given in your packet) figure is derived by taking just those farm buildings which currently qualify for the proposed exemption. To show how the proposed benefit would be distributed, I've consolidated the building assessments by road; the assessor's data is presented by road. I expect that all the buildings on Stearns Road belong to the Stearns' farm. The buildings on Wormwood Hill Road should belong to the Wells farm; they milk about 60 head of cattle. Their farm consists of about 6 acres; the barns are located there. They rent other land for hay, etc. I don't know the other properties.

Road	Assessment	Tax Benefit	% of total
Stearns	\$359,910	\$8,591	77%
Coventry	\$ 35,280	\$ 842	8%
So. Bedlam	\$ 43,960	\$1,049	10%
Bassetts Bridge	\$ 12,390	\$ 296	3%
Stafford/Ravine	\$ 4,620	\$ 110	1%
Wormwood Hill	\$14,280	\$ 341	3%

I suspect that lots of people in town would not like to know that their money was spent this way even if it is only \$11,000 - \$21,500.

Now, I want to ask you this. I think that the town manager should have given you **all** of the data now available about this ordinance before he presented the ordinance to you for consideration and a vote. As well, I think that the analysis I did above should have been done for you and presented to you. Do you agree? I really would like to know your opinion.

Of course, I think that much more thought by the town manager should have gone into this before this ordinance got to this point. Call me if you have any questions, 429-8300. Thanks.

MARCH 8, 2010  
January 31, 2008

To: Mansfield Town Council  
From: Betty Wassmundt

RE: Farm Property Exemption

I want to reiterate reasons why you should vote no for the proposed ordinance.

1. Some of the reasons given for passing the ordinance were:

- Preserve open space;
- Help farmers to keep their farms;
- Have local produce available.

There is no cause and effect relationship between tax breaks for a farmer and his **not** selling his land. Experience in this town shows this clearly; the farmer takes all tax breaks and when ready, he sells his property however he wants to.

The amount of money produced by this tax break is inconsequential to the marginal farmer. The bulk of the savings will go to the successful farmers in town; likely they do not need it. In fact, I calculate that about 77% (\$8591) of the benefit will go to the Stearns farm and just 3% (\$341) will go to the Wells farm on Wormwood Hill Road. The remaining 20% +/- will be split amongst about 4 other farms.

Surely we like to have local produce. But, consider, a person/farmer can produce lots of fine tomatoes, sun flowers, peaches, etc. on a small plot of land. There can be plenty to sell at the farmer's market and we want this produce; it enriches our lives. But, there is no land to preserve as open space, likely no barns and this person/farmer likely cannot qualify for the exemption based on income and expense. The ordinance in question does nothing for this small farmer. It will make him pay higher taxes as the tax burden is shifted.

2. One suggestion was to base this tax break on need. I urge you not to consider this. This is just one more costly administrative task for what will amount to not much money.

3. If you feel that you must have this ordinance, please look carefully at section 4 b. Perhaps a "residence to house seasonal workers" is adequately defined in statutes (I could not find the definitions) but I think there could be lots of questions about this in our town. Also, be prepared for people, other than the farmers you are thinking of, to come forth with buildings to tax exempt.

I have spoken with Irene, our assessor, about this "residence to house seasonal workers" issue. She tells me that after the public hearing she checked on the possible properties and that there should be none. She assured me that she would have the final say as to what residences would qualify. That sounds good and I respect Irene but, no ordinance should depend on any one person's opinion. Section 4 b should be removed or have clear definitions.

4. I prefer that you vote no to this ordinance and get on with budget issues. If you must "feel good" and really want to help the people who provide us with produce, milk, etc, I urge you to consider Mike Sikoski's suggestion that you provide a fund whereby a farmer in need could apply for money. Perhaps the Agriculture or Conservation commission could administer it. But, again, as you do this kind of thing, you create administrative issues and the general cost of government increases.

5. The best thing you can do for the farmer is to control spending and give us a lean and efficient government. That includes voting no for this ordinance. Thank you.

3-8-10 TO: TOWN COUNCIL  
FROM: E.T. WASSMUNDT

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**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**

WSJ.com

OPINION MARCH 2, 2010, 7:06 P.M. ET

## Time for a Spending Cap With Teeth

*The federal government should be limited to 20% of the national economy every year.*

By JEB HENSARLING AND MIKE PENCE

Fiscal storm clouds are upon us. In five years, federal spending has skyrocketed to 24.7% from 19.9% of our economy. That's the highest level since World War II. Borrowing has ballooned the national debt to \$11.9 trillion from \$7.3 trillion, a five-year increase equal to the accumulation of debt between President George Washington and President Bill Clinton.

Unfortunately, the long-term fiscal picture is worse. As the Baby Boom generation retires and the cost of health care continues to escalate, entitlement programs will cause federal spending to rise to 40% of our economy, double its post-World War II average. This is assuming that spending does not increase even further, an assumption that the trillion-dollar "stimulus" bill and the 84% increase in nondefense discretionary spending President Obama signed into law argues against.

The situation is dire, but don't take our word for it. "U.S. fiscal policy is on an unsustainable path to an extent that cannot be solved by minor tinkering," Congressional Budget Office Director Doug Elmendorf said recently. Former Comptroller General David Walker called the rising costs of government entitlements a "fiscal cancer" that threaten "catastrophic consequences for our country."

Can we tax our way out of this problem? No.

In order to pay for what we are on track to spend under current law, taxes would have to double. This would crush our economy and condemn future generations to a far lower standard of living. That is not an option.

Can we grow our way out? Unfortunately, no. Although pro-growth policies like simplifying the tax code and lowering rates are critical components of any solution, they alone are insufficient. Mr. Walker estimated it would take double-digit economic growth every year for the next 75 years in order to close the fiscal gap.

Can we continue to borrow our way out of the problem? Borrowing of that magnitude would drive up interest rates to unimaginable levels, crowding out borrowing opportunities for families and businesses. As Greece and other European countries like Spain and Portugal face default for their excess spending, and China lectures us on our fiscal irresponsibility, the idea of borrowing at still higher levels seems inconceivable.

Without spending discipline only one option remains: monetizing the debt, also known as inflation. Although Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke has repeatedly said that this will not happen on his watch, many think it's inevitable. If we do monetize the debt, inflation could be so high we may look back upon the Carter era with nostalgia.

Winston Churchill once said that "Americans can always be trusted to do the right thing, once all other possibilities have been exhausted." We've exhausted the possibilities. Now it's time to do the right thing.

That is why we are proposing a Spending Limit Amendment to the Constitution. This amendment would limit spending to

[http://online.wsj.com/article\\_email/SB10001424052748704231304575091622911663494-1MyQjAxMTA...](http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB10001424052748704231304575091622911663494-1MyQjAxMTA...) 3/8/2010

one-fifth of the economy (our historical spending average since World War II). The limit could only be waived by a declaration of war or by a two-thirds congressional vote.

As with other constitutional amendments, Congress would be given the authority to enforce and implement it. But for the first time, the federal government would have a limit on its size and scope. The Spending Limit Amendment does not promise a particular spending plan about what programs to restrain and by how much. Rather, it puts a legal constraint on lawmakers present and future.

Some will say it should not be done now. But if not now, when?

Our spending problems are tantamount to generational theft and fundamentally alter the American ethic. We cannot have both unlimited government and unlimited opportunity.

This amendment is an effort to allow "We the People" the opportunity to fundamentally define the size of our government. Passing it would save future generations from lives of fewer opportunities and less freedom.

*Mr. Hensarling, a Republican, is a congressman from Texas. Mr. Pence, a Republican, is a congressman from Indiana.*

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# Memo

To: Town Council  
From: Matt Hart, Town Manager *MH*  
CC: Town Employees  
Date: March 8, 2010  
Re: Town Manager's Report

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Below please find a report regarding various items of interest to the Town Council, staff and the community:

## Budget and Finance

- *FY 20010/11 Budget* – As a reminder, at the March 22, 2010 meeting I will present the Proposed FY 2010/11 Budget. The Town Council will review my proposed budget during the latter part of March and throughout the month of April. Interested residents are encouraged to see the Town's website for budget related information.
- *Revaluation* – I have attached the preliminary numbers for the 2009 revaluation. As you will note, real estate has increased by 5.12% and motor vehicles by 1.96%. Personal property values have decreased by 1.78% resulting in an overall increase of 4.64%.

## Council Requests for Information/Council Business

- *Commission on Aging Long Range Plan* – As requested by Council, attached please find a copy of this document. We have also included this item as part of the supplement for tonight's packet.
- *DPW Equipment Use Policy* – Attached please find a copy of this document, which had previously been distributed to the Council. We have also included this item as part of the supplement for tonight's packet.
- *School Building Committee Q & A Webpage* – Council requested a copy of the Q & A webpage for the School Building Committee. Please see item number 11 in your 3/8/10 Council packet for a copy of this document.
- *Town Council Rules of Procedure* – In tonight's Council packet (see item #12), we have included a copy of the Council's Rules of Procedure, as amended at your previous meeting.

## Departmental/Division News

- *Human Services*
  - *Senior Services hiring update* – The Town Manager's Office is in the process of filling the position vacancies at the Mansfield Senior Center. We have extended an offer to a preferred candidate for the social worker position; the individual is moving along in the recruitment process. Marilyn Gerling continues to serve as our interim senior services coordinator. The Town has submitted a proposal to the union to reclassify the position to a senior center coordinator and to modify the existing job description; upon reaching an agreement with the union, the Town will post the position opening and begin the recruitment.
  - *Volunteer transportation program* - This Wednesday, Marilyn and Kevin Grunwald will present three basic options to the Senior Center Association: (1) a volunteer driver program sponsored and staffed by the Association, with logistical support from the Town; (2) a volunteer driver program co-sponsored by the Association and the Town, and coordinated by a senior volunteer; or (3) a volunteer driver program sponsored and staffed by the Town. Also, Kevin is attending a Transportation Roundtable sponsored by the CT Association of Senior Center Personnel, and will be able to learn more about what other towns are doing.

- *Mansfield Resident Trooper's Office* - On February 19, 2010, the Connecticut State Police Statewide Narcotic Task Force - East Field Office and the Hartford Drug Enforcement Administration conducted a joint investigation into a large scale marijuana cultivation operation. Investigation lead to the execution of a narcotic related search warrant at 286 Woodland Road, Mansfield, CT. Members of the Mansfield Resident Troopers Office assisted with the execution of this search warrant. It was learned through this investigation that the rented property had been converted it into a sophisticated marijuana grow operation with each room functioning for various stages of the cultivation process. This operation resulted in the arrest of three individuals for various narcotic related charges and the seizure of narcotics and weapons.
- *Parks and Recreation* - The Mansfield Community Center will host a bike drive for the Little Angels Bicycle Program of Willimantic. The Little Angels program staff will evaluate all the bicycles that we receive and make any necessary repairs before distributing the bikes to children and adults in need. Mansfield residents in need of bikes should contact either Jay O'Keefe 860-429-3015 X104 or Little Angels directly at freebicycles@littleangelsbicycles.com (860-423-4290). The ability to fill bike orders for those in need is dependent on inventory and demand. Donations should be brought to the Community Center on April 10 between 9am -1pm.
- *Town Manager's Office* - Please see item number 13 in your 3/8/10 Council packet for the initial findings presented by the Municipal Opportunities for Regional Efficiencies (MORE) Commission. As you will recall, I serve as a member of the Commission's Town Functions Subcommittee, and am closely tracking this process due to Mansfield's interest in promoting regionalism.

### **Major Projects and Initiatives**

- *Police Study* - At its meeting last week the Regionalism Committee discussed the responses we received to our request for qualifications from various consulting firms to conduct an analysis of present and future police services. The committee agreed to interview five of the firms; our plan is to conduct those interviews next month.
- *School Building Project* - As noted above, in tonight's packet we have included the Q & A webpage for the School Building Committee. The committee is presently preparing its recommendation and report to the Board of Education and the Town Council, which the committee will distribute at the Board's meeting later this week. Also related to the project, at the previous Council meeting we discussed potential traffic impacts for the Southeast School area. Please see response #4 on page 145 in tonight's Council packet, for staff's preliminary comments on this issue.

### **Upcoming Meetings\***

- Youth Service Bureau Advisory Board, March 9, 2010, 11:30 AM, Conference Room B, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Town-University Relations Committee, March 9, 2010, 4:00 PM, Council Chambers, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Four Corners Sewer and Water Advisory Committee, March 9, 2010, 7:00 PM, Council Chambers, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Historic District Commission, March 9, 2010, 8:00 PM, Conference Room B, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Communications Advisory Committee, March 10, 2010, 7:00 PM, Conference Room C, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Ordinance Development and Review Subcommittee, March 11, 2010, 7:30 AM, Conference Room B, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Mansfield Board of Education, March 11, 2010, 7:30 PM, Council Chambers, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Planning and Zoning Commission, March 15, 2010, 7:00 PM, Council Chambers, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Committee on Committees, March 15, 2010, 7:00 PM, Conference Room B, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building

- Youth Service Bureau Advisory Board, March 16, 2010, 11:45 AM, Conference Room B, Audrey P. Beck Municipal-Building
- PZC Regulatory Review Committee, March 16, 2010, 2:00 PM, Council Chambers, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Mansfield Advocates for Children – Executive Council, March 17, 2010, 9:00 AM, Conference Room B, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Conservation Commission, March 17, 2010, 7:30 PM, Conference Room B, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Mansfield Community-Campus Partnership, March 18, 2010, 4:00 PM, University of Connecticut Student Union Room 410
- Town Council, March 22, 2010, 7:30 PM, Council Chambers, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building

*\*Meeting dates/times are subject to change. Please view the Town Calendar at [www.MansfieldCT.org](http://www.MansfieldCT.org) or contact the Town Clerk's Office at 429-3302 for a complete and up-to-date listing of committee meetings.*



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GRAND LIST COMPARISON FOR  
FISCAL YEAR 10/11

As of 2/25/10:

	Net Abstract 10/1/2008	Net Abstract * 10/1/2009	Change	% Change
Real Estate	\$825,436,800	\$867,718,010	\$42,281,210	5.12%
Personal Property	\$33,680,338	\$33,080,376	(\$599,962)	-1.78%
Motor Vehicles	\$66,977,787	\$68,292,605	\$1,314,818	1.96%
Grand Totals	\$926,094,925	\$969,090,991	\$42,996,066	4.64%

- \* The Grand List totals are the final figures signed by the Assessor **before** changes made by the Board of Assessment Appeals.